

TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION MINUTES

JUNE 29, 2005

Chair Knox White called the Transportation Commission to order at 7:40 p.m.

1.ROLL CALL – Roll was called and the following recorded:

Members Present:

John Knox White
Robert McFarland
Patianne Parker
Eric Schatmeier

Absent:

Robb Ratto
Michael Krueger
Jeff Knoth

Staff:

Barbara Hawkins – Public Works Department
Barry Bergman – Public Works Department
Andrew Thomas – Planning & Building Department

2.APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

The Commission agreed to postpone approval of the April 27 minutes until the end of the meeting.

3.AGENDA CHANGES: None

4.COMMISSION COMMUNICATIONS: None

5.ORAL COMMUNICATIONS: None

6.OLD BUSINESS:

6A. TMP Sub-Committees Appointments and Next Steps

Commissioner Parker mentioned that it has been a long time since the last meeting and that she did not get first choice of committees to pick to be on. She wanted to know who is on the committees.

Chair Knox White mentioned that there are two active sub-committees. The Bicycle Master Plan Update Committee includes Chair Knox White, and Commissioners Schatmeier and Ratto. The Circulation sub-committee is made up of Chair Knox White, and Commissioners Schatmeier and McFarland.

Chair Knox White said that this item was brought back to the Commission because of the need to form a Pedestrian Master Plan Subcommittee. He also noted that he has limited time available and would prefer not to sit on the Pedestrian or the Bicycle Master Plan sub-committee.

Chair Knox White noted that Commissioner Krueger had indicated that he is willing to serve on either the pedestrian or bicycle plan subcommittees, and that Commissioner Parker had expressed her interest in the circulation subcommittee. He also said that he would approach Commissioner Knoth about serving on the pedestrian plan subcommittee. He stated that he will send out an e-mail to the Commission the following week after speaking with the other commissioners.

Chair Knox White mentioned that Commissioner Knoth would be on the Pedestrian sub-committee. He thought it would be okay to have a two person sub-committee instead of a three person one. They would be able to cancel any number of meetings. The sub-committee should be self-driven, so it is important that subcommittee members be prepared to push items forward.

Commissioner Parker wanted to be on the Circulation committee but do not care to be on the Pedestrian or the Bicycle committee.

Staff Bergman had a draft of the TMP schedule for each of the three plans meetings scheduled for this year, which were handed out.

Chair Knox White asked that under the Commission Communications that bullets be inserted for each of the three sub-committees and have the head of that sub-committee give an update.

Staff Hawkins said that Michael Schmitz was selected from the Economic Development Committee (EDC) to be on the Task Force Committee. Contacted some of the other commissions and notice that some of their members were not active. She suggested sending an action item to the chair and have the chair be responsible for selecting someone.

7. NEW BUSINESS:

7A. Alameda Point Transportation Strategy Report

Commissioner Parker stated that one of the goals of the Alameda Point project is to seamlessly integrate the development into the rest of Alameda. However, some of the language emphasizes the separate nature of the project. For example, splitting the 63 Line will serve Alameda Point and downtown Oakland without serving the rest of the City. The document should not come across as saying that Alameda Point is better than the rest of Alameda.

Commissioner Schatmeier agreed with Commissioner Parker's concerns, but expressed support for the many innovative strategies presented in the report, such as developing a system where transit is self-supporting. This could serve as a model for other locations in Alameda as well as the Bay Area.

Chair Knox White noted that there is a long-term goal of a transit service connecting to the east end and Fruitvale BART station, and this would connect Alameda Point to the rest of the main island. He also stated that it may not be appropriate to address citywide policies in an Alameda Point-specific document.

Chair Knox White also wants the City to look at trip generation through the rest of the City as well as the tubes. He noted that the report talks about increasing BART ridership, but it would be helpful to know how many of the existing transit users drive to BART. If they are driving to BART, Alameda gets no benefit in terms of reducing congestion in Alameda. He asked how the queue jump lanes would be implemented, if there is a fund that would be reserved for this purpose.

Staff Thomas stated that while listed as a mid-term project, they are hoping that queue jump lanes will hopefully be a "Day 1" strategy. He noted that Oakland neighborhoods support this strategy as well. He noted that the queue jump lanes would make the transit options much more effective, but that they will be easier to implement from the Alameda side.

Commissioner Parker asked if the Broadway/Jackson project is part of this.

Staff Thomas said that one of the most promising strategies that would work within the Broadway/Jackson design is to segregate buses in the left lane of the Posey Tube, with cars going to the freeway directed to the right. The latter group would turn right on 5th Street in Oakland and be able to get directly onto freeway ramps, reducing the number of vehicles traveling through the intersection of 7th Street and Harrison Street.

Staff Thomas stated that splitting the 63 Bus route would enable headways to increase on both portions of the route. He also noted that this was only one option, another would be a privately funded shuttle from Alameda Point to downtown Oakland. He added noted that staff has had conversations with AC Transit regarding the EcoPass and have indicated that Alameda Point would need a minimum of 20 minute headways to downtown Oakland.

Commissioner Schatmeier asked if a direct bus from Alameda Point to San Francisco was considered.

Staff Thomas responded that the transbay buses were very well used, the question is how to get people to them. He also noted that since there are approximately 2000 residential units proposed for Alameda Point, there would probably not be sufficient demand to support a transbay bus route directly to San Francisco.

Commissioner McFarland asked how Alameda Point might be affected in future rounds of AC Transit service cuts.

Staff Thomas responded that the EcoPass should help protect these routes, as they provide a stable funding source for AC Transit, but if the City opted for a privately funded shuttle there would not be the same protection.

Chair Knox White expressed a concern that AC Transit could start requiring contributions like the EcoPass to get additional transit service.

Staff Thomas stated that this project could be a model for future development projects in Alameda. The developer working on the Oak to 9th Street project in Oakland has expressed interest in some of the ideas being explored for Alameda Point. He also suggested that other partners are possible, such as Catellus and the College of Alameda.

Commissioner Parker asked if the existing west Alameda neighborhood could be included.

Staff Thomas responded that this would be difficult, since residents would likely be willing to pay only for services they will use, whereas in an EcoPass program all residents of Alameda Point can be required to contribute toward transit services up front.

Chair Knox White asked if there had been any discussions with City CarShare.

Staff Thomas responded that they had not spoken specifically with that company, they would decide how to implement a CarShare program once the funds were in place.

Chair Knox White noted that something that should be considered is that City CarShare has been removing some of their “pod” locations in suburban areas because of low usage and suggested speaking with them to learn from their experience. He also stated that even if a BART station at Jack London Square doesn’t make sense, we don’t want to rule out the potential for a direct BART station in Alameda at some point in the future.

Staff Thomas stated that the focus was on being able to put some services in place early on. While the process included a very broad discussion of creative options for transportation, it became clear that many of the proposed solutions included elements that would require coordination with other agencies, so the City would have a limited amount of control. These items will be considered for long-term implementation. In terms of BART, he said that BART is considering a transfer station in Oakland, so all riders to other east bay destinations would have to transfer, and it’s possible that at that point a BART connection may make sense.

Chair Knox White asked how the \$50 million committed to transportation would be used.

Staff Thomas stated that \$20 million would be used to fund strategies up front. The \$20 million may be used to subsidize services early on, since many residents won’t be living there at first. The additional \$30 million would be the project’s contribution to the future long-term strategies.

Chair Knox White requested the following changes to the report:

Page 6 – bus shelters should be a Day 1 strategy, not mid-term

Page 7 – first line should say “Alameda Point”

He suggested that they should work to incorporate the ferry service into the EcoPass program, and that the Alameda Point Collaborative residents should be allowed to participate in the program.

Page 9 – He asked if the bifurcated 63 Route is a Day 1 or mid-term strategy.

Staff Thomas indicated that it could be either or neither. He said that the main goal is to have 15-20 minute headways for service to Alameda Point, however it is accomplished.

Chair Knox White expressed concern regarding the option to pay extra to buy additional on-site residential parking spaces, he hopes the cost will be sufficient that everyone will not choose to have the additional parking space.

Commissioner Parker stated that it would be harder to sell units with only a single car garage.

Commissioner Schatmeier noted that on Bay Farm Island it's difficult to get people to use transit, since they moved there when the bus ran infrequently and there was no weekend service. He hoped they will market the transit options, and use that to attract buyers.

Chair Knox White asked if location-efficient mortgages (LEM) had been considered. These allow people who live in areas with access to transit to qualify for larger mortgages, since presumably they would have lower transportation costs. LEMs are available in San Francisco.

Staff Thomas responded that LEMs have not been considered up to this point.

Chair Knox White said that he was confused by the discussion of CarSharing on p. 12, where it states that the CarShare fleet will be used for the guaranteed ride home (GRH) program, but that when vehicles are not available users could utilize the county GRH program, which operates under a voucher system.

Staff Thomas responded that if the transportation coordinator could offer employees use of CarShare vehicles for GRH if the vehicles were not being used for other purposes; otherwise employees would rely on the existing county program.

Chair Knox White asked that it be noted in the document that the bus rapid transit (BRT) vehicle depicted in Eugene is actually a simulation.

Commissioner Parker stated that the meaning of the statement "Marketing efforts will target employees regardless of their origins" is not clear.

Staff Thomas responded that the phrase was referring to trip origins, and that this would be clarified.

Commissioner Parker noted that the document refers to a 1% increase in transit use as a result of marketing initiatives, which seems very low for the amount of effort being devoted to this.

Staff Thomas responded that the 1% refers more to some of the traditional transportation demand management strategies, and that the wording would be revised to clarify this point.

Chair Knox White asked for clarification regarding the City's intention to use the former Alameda Belt Line right of way for a transit corridor.

Staff Thomas confirmed that this is part of the plan.

Chair Knox White stated that a service operated by AC Transit will be better than a privately operated shuttle, as it will integrate into the larger transit system.

Staff Thomas said that the outcome depends on a determination of what the City will receive from each scenario.

Chair Knox White recommended that the Mayor and City Council should work with the AC Transit board members to encourage an arrangement for service at Alameda Point. He stated that AC Transit may even be willing to offer Alameda a better deal just to get the program off the ground and serve as an example of what could be done in other developments.

Chair Knox White expressed his strong support for the findings in the report.

Staff Thomas praised the Alameda community and the Transportation Commission for helping keeping the solutions realistic.

Commissioner Parker noted that the long-term solutions are really projects that affect the entire island, and asked that the language be changed to refer to travel "to and within Alameda Point and the City of Alameda" to emphasize that.

Commissioner Parker said that many people will oppose light rail.

Staff Thomas responded that transit technologies are improving, and that lighter weight vehicles or bus rapid transit may have similar operational characteristics to rail but be less invasive to neighborhoods.

8. STAFF COMMUNICATIONS: None

The Minutes will be discussed at the next meeting.

9.ADJOURNMENT:

Meeting was adjourned at 9:02 p.m.

G:\pubworks\LT\TRANSPORTATION\COMMITTEES\TC\2005\0605\062905minutesfinal.doc